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THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER

why they liked 'the lads'

THERE WERE A FEW DARING dresses but in the main, streeing ankle-lengths were paraded by the Limerick ladies who packed the City Theatre to be titillated by 'The Lads'.

They were all shapes and sizes. Sometimes the promise of a bosom proudly protested against the protective neckline but by the play's end nothing further had emerged. It was ever so elegant in the new foyer, where groups of delighted-to-be-alive dollies chatted about the juicy side of theatre and the names of playwrights fell from their lips like stock market prices from a member

of the Crescent's Ignatian Community.

Drink was available. The bar was well stocked. Three waiters, manfully struggled through a sea of elbows and bosoms to slake the thirst of the elegant ladies and debonair gents. The bar struggle was all included in the price ... but what the odds ... it was a first night and anyone who was anyone was there.

The gong discreetly sounded and the expensively-coated blob of flesh floated into seats to the accompaniment of up-tempo Irish music, highly appropriate for the new up-tempo native gombeen men. It must have appealed to their Nationalist convictions the culmination of which was

continued overleaf



"ACTUALLY DUCKIE I THINK THIS NEW CULTURAL REVOLUTION IS JUST FAB."

CLOSED SHOPS

THE TERM 'CLOSED SHOP' has recently come into the news in the Limerick area. For over a year the Limerick Harbour Commissioners and the port importers have been trying to get the local Dock Labourers Society to agree to end the closed shop situation at the docks whereby work is confined to members of the Society and their sons. The dockers have rejected proposals to abolish their society, and negotiations appear to be deadlocked at present.

For some months past, a similar struggle has been going on between the employers at the Clover Meats factory and the Limerick Pork Butchers' Society. The conflict arose over a new procedural agreement and an attempt to wind-up the society. A compromise solution was finally agreed upon, full details of which have not been published, resulting in the acceptance by the butchers of the new agreement, retention of their Society and control over the entry of new members—similar to the dockers.

It is ironic that at a time when the port and bacon factory employers are trying to end the closed shops in their respective areas, another firm in the Limerick district, Ferenka, has entered into another form of closed shop agreement with the Limerick branch of the National Electrical Engineering Trade Union. This agreement has come under fire from the Limerick district

branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. In a statement issued to the 'Limerick Leader' on June 17, this union said that its members are being refused work at the Ferenka plant because they refuse to quit their union and join the National Electrical Engineering Trade Union. The AEU accused the management of operating a closed shop with the NEETU regarding the employment of fitters. They claimed that 20 fitters have already been employed at the plant, none of whom are members of the AEU. They also accused the Ferenka management of turning away some of their members because they refused to join the NEETU.

The AEU has its headquarters in Britain and has 3,000 members in Southern Ireland and 10,000 in Northern Ireland. The NEETU has its headquarters in Dublin and it is the bigger of the two unions in Southern Ireland.

Replying to the AEU's statement, Michael P. Finnan, Limerick branch president of the NEETU, said 'that the AEU had house agreements all over the country and that the Limerick branch of the AEU had tried to negotiate this type of agreement with a firm in this region.' He went on to claim that Limerick engineering workers were forced into the AEU from the NEETU when they crossed to England. 'I go so far as claiming one-third of the membership of the AEU in Limerick was recruited this way,'

he said.

Michael Finnan added that the continued fragmentation of trade unionism hurt everyone and the nation. 'Let us deal with the problem and find a solution whereby we can have one Irish union in engineering, an organisation looking after the interests of its members and the workers of this country along with all our people in association with other unions,' he concluded.

The Ferenka closed shop situation remains unsolved and, indeed, a similar arrangement is being operated by the NEETU in co-operation with other factory managements.

James Connolly, faced with a somewhat similar inter-union problem, wrote in an article in 'Forward' of May 23, 1914: 'Just what is the real remedy of this state of matters, it would be hard to say. But it is at least certain that the organisations I have been speaking of have not discovered the true methods of working class organisations. They may be on the road to discovering it; they may also be on the road to foisting upon the working class a form of organisation which will make our last state infinitely worse than our first. It is the old story of adopting the letter but rejecting the spirit. The letter of industrial concentration is now accepted by all-trade union officials, but the spirit of the working class solidarity is woefully absent. Each union and each branch of each union desires above all things to show a good balance sheet, and that that might be done every nerve is strained to keep their

continued overleaf

'the lads'

continued from front page

their dutiful attention for the National Anthem.

So in the darkness of anticipation, our 'betters' waited to be 'culturised' by a succession of 'shags', 'Christs', and 'fucks' which were all thoroughly enjoyed. A measure of the new-found sophistication of the audience was shown when not a protected bosom heaved in the half-light when 'The Lads' dropped down to their drawers and when Miss Cullen was stripped to her unliberated essentials none of the blasé superboys were aroused to even a mildly panting passion.

The press screamed acclamation with an obscene patronisation which must have embarrassed not only the cast, but even Jack Bourke (some feat!) who, shrewd businessman that he is, must have been worried about the press publicity 'over-kill' when he saw the 'Limerick Leader' giving three front-page 'plugs' to 'The Lads'.

For long, Limerick culture has been equated with money. Culture could be bought with money and the more you earned the more cultured you became until you achieved the right social status. From then on all one had to do was to grunt occasionally during a play; look intense during a recital and interested during an opera. But the new and emerging middle classes are desperately seeking something more 'with-it' ... so 'The Lads' was acclaimed.

For years Limerick has tolerated bad housing, unemployment, jobbery, and many other evils perpetrated against the working class, but no plays were produced highlighting these topics.

Yes, 'The Lads' was different, 'liberal' Limerick was tested and successfully rose to the occasion. The only walk-out during the week took place a little further up the road at Clover Meats. Limerick liberalism has been non-existent in the past, when old-style Catholicism and clerical domination ruled the cultural and religious roost. The box-office triumph of 'The Lads' represents a victory for the emerging Limerick liberalism in the ideological struggle between liberal capitalism and the old order.



CLOSED SHOPS

continued from front page

members at work, and in a condition to pay subscriptions. Hence the pitiful dodges to avoid taking sympathetic action in support of other unions, and hence also the constant victories of the master class upon the industrial field.'

Connolly concluded the article: '... At present we are too much afraid of each other. Whatever be our form of organisation, the spirit of sectionalism still rules and curses our class.'

(to be continued)

THE LONDON LOST

People pouring all around me
Close to my cold breath
Lonely looking they sadly stare
And see the image of death.

Go and stand by a railway
Flashes a fiery pattern weave
And record the angry-spoken words
'Limerick is a place to leave.'

'Jaysus 'tis huge', you said
Standing at Marble Arch
Dwarfed by the bunny club
Caught in Nelson's only eye.

'Jaysus 'tis pox', you said
Cursing the Catholic bitch
Who charged only thirty bob
Because you sang 'Danny Boy'.

We were two of thousands
Who began as messenger boys
Serving the rich of the city
Always fooled by their lies.

Yes ... Kilburn was our salvation
It got Fianna Fail off the hook
And while Ministers drove Mercedes
We had no work ... Just 'tough luck'.

Poor Paddies out of mind
Except on the 'Feast of our National
Apostle'
Out of sight in London
And nobody asked why.

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PRICES

SEAN GRIFFIN

I was sitting in a bar,
In the centre of the town.
Reading yet another newspaper,
My face creased in a frown;
I was reading of the 'cult';
That is the order of the day,
The headlines screamed at me,
'Higher prices on the way'.

I was simply flabbergasted.
I was purple in the face,
'It is perfectly preposterous,
It's a disaster, it's a disgrace.
It's a trick, why, it's atrocious.
It's pathetic, it's a plot ...'
'Pardon me ...' I was interrupted,
'Simmer down and tell me ... what?'
I gulped and then I grumbled
With a twitter and a grouse;
'Why, the price of food has risen
By twenty per cent an ounce.'

Now you may say;
It's nothing new,
You're ready to shoot me down;
But remember, that already,
We have the 'highest prices', in our town;
Oh, Limerick's still beautiful;
The Shannon is still majestic;
But the housewife gets less
In her shopping basket.

I wonder when the system
Will one day, surprise us all;
Instead of letting prices rise,
Will instead cause them to fall;
And when this day comes,
I hope I'm here to see,
The price of food going down,
And socialist justice for you and me.

A NIGHT IN THE DAY OF A SHIFTWORKER

JOHN SHINNORS

Children play out in the sunny street
They laugh, jump, scream and leap.
'I rise from my sweaty bed
With an empty hungry feeling

Pull the warm curtain
To stop the sun's glowing heat
Fall wearily back into the sweat bed
And try to get some sleep.

Nature never was planned this way
To sleep the long hot summer away
For not even the beast of the jungle
Slumbers all through the day.

To a machine my life I'm giving
So that rich greedy men are fed
But the hours of the day are for the living
And the hours of the night for the dead.



THE IRISH CONGRESS has signed yet another National Wage Agreement, and the employers and most of the leaders of the large unions are united in their satisfaction. For about three weeks before the agreement was accepted, a powerful and influential section of the ICTU and the Irish Transport and General Workers Union leadership joined forces with the employers and Government ministers in hoodwinking workers into believing that all those in the lower income group would benefit from the agreement. The impression was also given that real wages would increase for all other workers and that full employment was around the corner.

Just how far this is from the truth can be seen by a review of how the previous National Wage Agreement worked. Far from the lower income workers closing the financial gap we had rising profits for the employers and rising unemployment to the extent of over 70,000 people. For those at work the agreement meant signing away the right to strike for better wages. Pious aspirations about 'more jobs' and 'full employment' look impressive on paper but are useless for the many thousands of young people who have just left school and are trying to get a toe-hold on the labour market.

With workers wages tightly controlled and the employers' profits unchecked it can be clearly seen who benefits from national wage agreements. In view of this position it might well be asked why the ICTU was in such a hurry to sign the agreement. It was argued by some of the union leaders that if the workers turned down the offer, the Government would step in and impose a

'RESPONSIBLE' TRADE UNIONISM

wage freeze with the further possibility of anti-strike legislation along the lines of the British workers who have struggled to make this act unworkable. The recent British dock strike showed how the government was forced to back down before the militant pressure of the dockers by releasing the five jailed workers.

As it is likely that Irish workers would have fought in a similar manner to resist any infringement on their industrial rights the ICTU was intent on heading off any confrontation with the employers or the Government. The union leaders wanted to avoid this as it would mean the end of the present shadow-boxing charade that passes for 'meaningful negotiations.' The way in which the agreement was signed underlines the 'softly-softly' approach which hides itself behind the term 'responsible trade unionism.'

While some of the small craft unions stated their opposition to the terms and the principle of the agreement, they were outvoted by the vote-blocks of the large general unions such as the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and

the Workers Union of Ireland. Of course the agreement makes life a little easier for the union leaders but its real purpose is to blunt working class militancy. And at the end of all the talking and haggling all that is achieved is a wage increase on paper and this is quickly eaten up by rising prices. As the agreement comes into effect the worker continues his role of the dog chasing his tail.

How then can the average trade unionist alter this state of affairs? One of the features of modern trade unionism, especially the large general unions, is the manner in which democracy is distorted by the head office officials working in collusion with local yes-men. The widespread resentment shown by many Limerick members of the ITGWU against the undemocratic manner in which the present agreement was bulldozed through, reached expression in a protest picket placed on Connolly Hall, to draw attention to the fact that large sections of the local ITGWU membership were denied the opportunity of voting for or against the agreement.

Workers must unite in the struggle to bring about an effective and more democratic trade union structure, to be controlled by the workers themselves. To make any progress towards this goal it will be necessary for workers to organise themselves into strong workers' councils and shop-floor committees. Only when this movement develops and the class solidarity of workers strengthened, will we have responsible trade unionism—responsible to the workers, and not, as in the present agreement, to the bosses.

THE PLEBISCITE

THROUGHOUT THE CURRENT anti-partitionist campaign there has been a deliberate and successful campaign by Catholic nationalist leaders to confuse the issue of civil rights for Catholics within Northern Ireland with the existence of the state itself. The question to be posed in the plebiscite this autumn will separate these two issues (in so far as they can be separated): this autumn the people of Northern Ireland will be asked to vote for or against incorporation into Jack Lynch's Republic. The objective economic interest of Catholic workers in Northern Ireland at this present time does not lie in a united Ireland (even if it could be achieved against the wishes of the whole Ulster Protestant community) and no matter how much Jack Lynch or John Hulme may twist and turn that simple fact cannot be denied or ignored.

That there will be a large majority for the retention of the union is not in doubt; the British government was fully aware of that when the plebiscite was promised, which is further evidence (if evidence is needed) that the British government has no intention of forcing the Ulster Protestants into a united Ireland—it would be politically difficult to set up

machinery to hold a plebiscite, and then go against its verdict.

What is in doubt is the number of Catholics who will vote for the union. A recent 'fortnight' poll suggested that only 24% of Catholics would vote 'yes' to a united Ireland and 41% would vote 'no'. When Gerry Fitt described the plebiscite as a 'devisive', he was quite right—he would have a hard job finding a plebiscite that wasn't—what distresses Gerry is that the division will come in the wrong place for him.

The Southern government and opposition and the SDLP in the North are all normally committed to unification by voluntary agreement. In the Dail on July 4th, answering a question on the plebiscite, Jack Lynch said: 'An issue of this nature (i.e. unification) should not be decided by one section of the people' and agreed with Fine Gael leader Liam Cosgrave when he said: 'An artificially selected area could not be regarded as a justifiable unit for a decision of this kind.'

John Hulme does not accept the plebiscite because, he says, the setting up of the Northern Ireland state itself was a jerry-mander—the SDLP constitution accepts the Northern Ireland state as legitimate, but their consistency is not one of the SDLP's virtues.

With the holding of the plebiscite their commitment to voluntary unification is exposed for what it is—a propaganda gimmick. It wouldn't go down very well in the international press if they said they

were for forcible incorporation of the North into the South. So they pretend to be for voluntary unification.

The plebiscite has shown that they are not prepared to accept the implications of unity by consent—that the other party has the right not to unite. (Reprinted from the 'Two Nations').

quote

1798 was an abortive Irish edition of the French Revolution—despite the lying twaddle of the present day about the society of United Irishmen being a 'Union of All Classes', there is not in history any record of a movement, except the Paris Commune, in which the classes and the masses were so sharply divided; 1848 found its inspiration in the promptings of a famine—and its failure in the total incapacity of the doctrinaire Young Irelanders to understand the difference between revolutionary action and 'heroic' posings; the Land League found its inspiration in a partial failure of the crops and in the newly developed competition of America—and the collapse of the Land League came with reduced rents and partial prosperity.' ('The New Evangel').

ON TUESDAY, APRIL 22 the London 'Times', in its third leader titled, 'The Strike at Limerick,' stated: '... The intention is to expand the strike at Limerick until it spreads throughout the country, though we think the plan will prove a failure, and that common sense will soon prevail. The strike at Limerick is nominally the outcome of the proclamation of the city as a special military area under the Defence of the Realm regulations. This step was taken by the Irish Government in consequence of the tragedy in Limerick Workhouse, when in an attempt to rescue a Sinn Fein prisoner both the prisoner himself and one of his guards were killed. The declaration of the Government meant among other things, that a military permit is required to enter or leave the city. It happens that the principle factory in the neighbourhood is situated across the River Shannon and outside the military cordon. Brigadier-General Griffin, who is in local command, offered a general permit for work-people employed at the factory; but in the meantime the local trade unions had declared a general strike and had formed a strike committee. The internal control of the city has passed into the hands of the committee, who are adopting the most approved Soviet methods. They regulate the opening of the shops, and even direct the sales. They are also endeavouring to decide prices, though not with very much success. As money is running short among the strikers, they are about to issue an equivalent of promissory notes, of a value of from one to ten shillings, guaranteed by 'the workers of Limerick' and signed by the Limerick Trade and Labour Council.

'The military measures taken at Limerick must be regarded as a mere pretext for the activities of the Irish Labour Party. It has been known for many weeks that the Irish Transport Workers' Union and similar

organisations contemplated the fomenting of strikes at different centres, in the hope of gradually producing an industrial deadlock throughout Ireland. Political grievances are a secondary consideration with the Labour wing, whose chief aims are indistinguishable from similar movements in other countries. The trouble at Limerick gave them the chance they were looking for, but if it had not occurred they would doubtless have found some other occasion to fulfil their purpose. Up to late last night the city remained extremely quiet and orderly. The shopkeepers, who are the principal victims, accept the situation, because they know that if they refuse to obey the behests of the Strike Committee they may be boycotted when the trouble is over. For the same reason they will doubtless feel compelled to accept the preposterous notes issued by the Strike Committee. Last night a crowd of about a thousand people attempted to re-enter the city by the Sarsfield Bridge without showing their permits. The military authorities took instant precautions, and it seemed probable that the episode would end without disturbance. Various Labour leaders were converging upon Limerick yesterday, and it is understood that a decision will be reached today on the question of a general strike throughout Ireland. The prevalent opinion in Ireland appears to be any call of the kind will not meet with a widespread response. Ireland has never been so prosperous as she is today, and the bulk of the community object very strongly to the wanton creation of industrial strike. Even in Limerick it is recognised that the local strike must quickly collapse, as is the case with all general strikes, unless very large monetary help is sent at once. The strikers are understood to be looking to England for help, but we fancy that

THE LIMERICK SOVIET

by jim kemmy

part six

English working men have other use for their money, now none too plentiful, and will hardly be willing to pour it into a country which has grown affluent during the war. And if the workmen of a single Irish city say they cannot maintain their general strike without funds from England, what prospect is there of the success of a wider movement of the kind? In the meantime Dublin has suddenly been afflicted by a strike of the staffs of all the hotels and restaurants, which have been promptly closed by the proprietors. In this instance also the primary motives are apparently not political. The waiters and other members of the hotel staffs are demanding a forty-four hour week and wages at a rate which the employers state they are unable to concede. Only eight months ago the Dublin hotel workers were given a substantial advance in wages as the result of arbitration, and since then the cost of living has begun to decline. The real truth is that in Ireland, as the hotel proprietors state, there is a 'tendency to develop dispute after dispute in all

connolly

IT IS THE RECOGNITION by the working class of its essential unity, the manifestation in our daily industrial relations that our brother's fight is our fight, our sister's troubles are our troubles, that we are all members one of another. In practical operation it means that when any body of workers are in conflict with their employers, that all other workers should co-operate with them in attempting to bring that particular employer to reason by refusing to handle his goods. That, in fact, every employer who does not consent to treat his work people upon a civilised basis should be treated as an enemy of civilisation, and placed and kept outside the amenities and facilities offered by civilised communities. In other words, that he and his should be made tabu, treated as unclean, as tainted, and therefore likely to contaminate all others. The idea is not new. It is as old as humanity.



IN THE LONG RUN the freedom of a nation is measured by the freedom of its lowest class.

IN THE AFTERMATH of the Provo bombing on Friday, July 21st, significant developments have occurred. A few days later the SDLP announced that they were going to end their year-long policy of non-cooperation and talk to the Whitelaw administration. Then on July 31st the British Army occupied all 'no-go' areas in Northern Ireland, including the Bogside and Creggan, with apparently little opposition on the part of the Catholic population.

For the first time the SDLP has openly attacked the Provos, accusing them of: 'Having no concern whatsoever for human life; no concern for democracy; not placing the same importance as did the people on internment; seeming to be intent on provoking both a Protestant backlash and military action against the Catholic areas; and showing no ability to take advantage of political opportunities.' (Newsletter, July 27).

What is one to make of all this from a party which for so long has trailed along behind the Republican campaign, claiming to oppose 'the men of violence' but refusing to make a clean break with their basic beliefs? When the SDLP was formed in 1970 it was, by its constitution, supposed to be a party which would work constructively within the Northern Ireland state, for so long as the Protestant majority wished that state to continue. But those claims could

SDLP

not be taken very seriously in the light of its subsequent actions and pronouncements.

Before direct rule, an impasse had been reached. The main parliamentary representatives of the Catholic community, the SDLP, were making the Stormont system unworkable. The point of direct rule was to regain the co-operation of those representatives by creating a more favourable atmosphere for the development of democratic politics, without at the same time endangering the basic demand of the Protestant community—maintenance of the union with Britain. The British government was clearly banking on this policy to draw representatives of the Catholic community back into the sphere of democratic politics and now we see the first substantial sign that their policy may be paying off.

This must be welcomed as a progressive development—one which workers of both communities should support. For it is clear that any solution to the present conflict must involve actual administrative and other co-operation between the representatives of both communities. And as long as the basic demand of the majority for retention of the union is guaranteed, then the majority has nothing to lose and

sorts and conditions of industry.' It is the outcome of the efforts of the Transport Workers' Union to paralyse the national life of Ireland, but in reality there is no country where the doctrines of Syndicalism are less likely to obtain a firm hold. The chief sufferers will be the strikers themselves.'

'Limerick was in an edgy state, it had just been relieved of a siege and there was still a crack or two of sniping at night. There was a strike on at the bacon factories; and there was an attempt to start a Soviet. I went to see the committee and politely took my hat off and made a small French bow when I went into their room. The leader told me to put my hat on: they had finished, he said, with bourgeois manners. We had a wrangle about this because, although I am shy, I am touchy and argued back. We had a rapid duel of sarcasms. He was one of those 'black' Irishmen one occasionally comes across; there was another, a waiter at the hotel in Limerick who threw a plate of bacon and eggs at a customer. He was a big fellow who looked murderous every time he came into the dining room with a plate.'

V. S. Pritchett 'Midnight Oil' p. 115.

The 'Times' followed up this editorial with a report of the following day, April 23 from 'its own correspondent' headed, 'A Blank Shot on the Shannon' and

'Theatrical Protest'. The report described a confrontation between the strikers and the military at Sarsfield Bridge: 'Perfect peace reigned in Limerick today and no attempt has been made to maintain last night's ominous vigil on the right bank of the Shannon. The deliberate nature of that performance, which, but for the tact and firmness of the military authorities might have had serious results, is quite manifest. On Monday morning posters were issued announcing a hurling match at Caherdavin, a few miles outside the city. It was largely attended by strikers and others, including women and children, permits need not be shown to the sentries by persons who are leaving the city, and it was well known that many of the strikers had left their homes without permits.'

'The people who were in possession of permits returned at about 7 o'clock but a large number of men acting in concert remained behind. They arrived at Sarsfield Bridge in a body at about 8 o'clock. The sentries on observing their approach summoned the guard. The leaders of the body marched up to the guard and then wheeled to the right followed by the others. There were about a thousand men in the crowd and they continued to march in a circle on the Clare side of the bridge. In the meantime the military had formed a cordon with fixed bayonets across the centre of the bridge; machine-guns were placed in position in the windows of the temporary military quarters looking out on the bridge and a tank and an armoured car were quickly on the scene.'

A large number of the citizens gathered on the city side to watch these movements and there was intense excitement when a blank shot was fired as a warning. Then a strong body of policemen armed with bayonets arrived, passed through the sentries, and halted at a short distance from the crowd,

which still continued to revolve. Next a Franciscan friar crossed the bridge and addressed the crowd and there was an appreciable thinning in its ranks, but the majority continued to move in a circle and as each man came opposite a sentry he announced that he had no permit. He was refused admission to the city and moved on in the circle. At 10 o'clock the demonstrators were still making their protest, but their numbers were then reduced considerably and at midnight all of them had disappeared. It was afterwards learned that many had got into the city by rowing boats further up the river. Others had got accommodation in private houses in Thomondgate. Mr. Johnson, the delegate of the National Labour Executive, is among those who still remain on the Clare side of the river and it is said that he will refuse to seek military permission to enter the city.

The report concluded with a paragraph headed, 'An Amusing Sequel': 'Midnight— There was an amusing sequel to the scene at Sarsfield Bridge on Monday night. When the crowd relinquished its vigil at midnight, the majority went to a temperance hall, where a concert and dance were held and food was obtained from food depots. This morning the refugees walked in a body to Longpavement railway station a short distance from the city and boarded in an incoming train from Ennis. When the train drew up outside Limerick the ticket checkers were bewildered by the number of passengers without tickets or permits. The carriage doors were then locked and military sentries placed outside them. After a time the train moved off to Limerick station where a double row of military was waiting on the platform. The refugees however jumped from the carriages on the opposite side and escaped cheering wildly.' (To be continued).

SHIFT

everything to gain from such co-operation. Nothing else can enable the Northern Ireland state to return to normal living.

Scepticism about the ability of the SDLP to carry through this new policy is understandable, and their reaction to the ending of the 'no-go' areas has given fresh ground for scepticism. But in the present situation it is wrong to allow such scepticism to obscure possible positive developments. Even the Unionist party and the 'Newsletter' have managed to be reasonably objective about the SDLP's move to welcome it. But 'Vanguard' in its statement on it had nothing positive to say at all. The only thing it could muster was a backward-looking tirade about the SDLP getting into a better position to pressurise Whitelaw into granting a united Ireland.

'Vanguard' is of course correct when it points out that 'the same M's' (those of the SDLP) 'in the early days encouraged these evil men' (i.e. the IRAs) 'by their association with them'. Fitt himself admitted in his recent statement that the association between the SDLP and the IRAs had been extremely close when he said that the party had decided it would no longer be 'held hostage' (i.e. by the Provos). It is

certainly true that so far the SDLP has given in to the Provo pressure all along the line. Its abstentionist policy began soon after Faulkner put the party's constitutional sincerity to the test by offering its members positions on certain parliamentary committees in July 1971. The IRAs put on the pressure, knowing the danger to them if sections of the Catholic community became involved in parliamentary politics within the Northern Ireland state. The SDLP backed down from such involvement at the first suitable opportunity. (The occasion was the refusal of the British government to hold an inquiry into the killing by the British army of two civilians in Derry. It was not even a very suitable opportunity, because logically the SDLP should have abstained from Westminster as a result and not from Stormont. But they were desperate for something, and any excuse was better than none).

Fitt in his recent statement also unwittingly admitted that the SDLP is merely tail-ending developments in the Catholic community when he said that the SDLP 'was confident that there was not only widespread support but a widespread demand among the people for talks at the present time.'

In other words, the SDLP never took a lead in developing democratic politics among the minority, but it is now

responding to the pressures to do so from the community.

The SDLP reaction to the ending of the 'no-go' areas demonstrated how concerned they were to be in a position to follow the reaction in the Catholic community as a whole. Initially Ivan Cooper (among others) said that the talks were definitely off, but as the 'Irish Times' (August 2nd) put it: 'The explosions in Claudy modified their views and the views of their constituents and convinced them that talks had to take place.' Then another SDLP statement (August 3rd) accused Whitelaw of 'flirting with Unionists and the UDA', apparently by 'encouraging the UDA to take down their barricades' (!) and asked 'how much has Mr. Whitelaw done to stop the Protestant assassination squads'—no mention of the Provo campaign! It was all pitched so that if Catholic opposition to the army becomes more intense, the SDLP can opt out once more.

The interests of the workers require the development of a normal democratic system here. If the SDLP can rise to the occasion and help bring this about, well and good. Workers should see it as a necessary step towards normal bourgeois democracy in Northern Ireland, which will facilitate unity and the much-needed development of real socialist politics. (Reprinted from the 'Two Nations').

here's to your health

FROM SOUTHILL housing estate to the Limerick Regional Hospital is a long journey. For many working class families it means not only a long but expensive journey. During the week, householders in Limerick's largest housing estate must have been pleased to learn that the city's first Health Clinic is to be built in their area.

Their satisfaction at the news must have been short lived when they discovered that the Health Clinic has been planned for the past four years. During that time much concerned talk was delivered by public representatives but it did not shorten the long journey to the Regional by one iota. Nor indeed did it keep the bus fares down. Paying lip-service to suffering is a common virtue among Limerick's fly-boy politicians.

Maybe in four years time when the Health Clinic is finally erected we will see the self-same politicians parading like proud peacocks about Southill saying that only for them the people would never have the Clinic. Within its range of services, the Clinic does not, however, propose to treat the highly prevalent Limerick disease of hypocrisy. There are bound to be hundreds of germs floating around when eventually the official opening day for the O'Malley Park Health Clinic dawns.

'But taking the Labour Party as a whole it could be said with truth that today Maynooth is well to the left of the Irish Labour Party'. Michael McInerney, 'Irish Times', 11/4/72.

poems

EAT MORE

by Joe Corrie

'Eat more fruit!' the slogans say,
'More fish, more beef, more bread!'
But I'm on Unemployment pay
My third year now, and wed.

And so I wonder when I'll see
The slogan when I pass,
The only one that would suit me,
'EAT MORE BLOODY GRASS!'

connolly's socialism

'Examine the great revolutionary movements of history and you find that in all cases they sprang from unsatisfactory social conditions, and had their origin in a desire for material well-being. In other words, the seat of progress and source of revolution is not in the brain, but in the stomach. The fact that this truth has hitherto been obscured, or even denied; that the pioneers of progress uniformly clothed their political demands in the most idealistic language and the most flowery phraseology; or that they constantly appealed for the support of 'all unselfish and generous souls,' rather than to commonplace interests, only proves that we all are too prone to hide from ourselves the real nature of our impelling desires, and, even when most stubbornly following our grossest instincts, to throw around our actions all the glamour of 'spiritual cravings', or 'patriotic hopes.'

'ONCE AND FOR ALL it must be understood that he who strikes at labour in Ireland will get blow for blow in return. It may be necessary to wait patiently for years, but when the opportunity comes the blow should be swift and decisive and merciless' (Workers' Republic, June 1915).

'On the working class of Ireland, therefore, devolves the task of conquering political representation for their class as the preliminary step towards the conquest of political power. This task can only be safely entered upon by men and women who recognise that the first action of a revolutionary army must harmonise in principle with those likely to be its last, and that, therefore, no revolutionists can safely invite the co-operation of men or classes, whose ideals are not theirs, and whom, therefore, they may be compelled to fight at some future critical stage of the journey to freedom. To this category belongs every section of the propertied class, and every individual of those classes who believes in the righteousness of his class position. The freedom of the working class must be the work of the working class. And let it be remembered that the timidity of the slave induces audacity in the tyrant, but the virility and outspokenness of the revolutionists ever frightens the oppressor himself to hide his loathsomeness under the garb of reform. And thus remembering, fight for your class at every point.' ('Erin's Hope—The End and the Means').

'The power and unconquerable optimism of the socialist party is due to their recognition of this material basis of history, this economic basis of politics knowing that their ultimate deal and immediate demands are in line with the progress of the human race towards prosperity and that every scheme for better social conditions are all likely to effect its purpose must be of the nature of a step in their direction, socialists cannot lose courage, because even the midst of temporary defeat they know that the needs of the workers who are in the majority, will eventually impel them into line with the Social-Revolutionary forces. From this fact our Irish politicians—and revolutionists—may gain not comfort, perhaps, but wisdom. The history of the American Revolution, the French Revolution and the Irish Volunteers, the Risings of 1798, 1848, and the Irish Land League, all bear out our argument upon the economic basis of great political movements.

'The American Revolution was a revolt against the action of England in throttling the infant industries of America, and came to a head with the tax upon tea—all 'base' material reasons; the French Revolution was the revolt of oppressed and famished people against out-worn medieval landlordism (feudalism) and the vexacious taxes upon industry imposed by a corrupt court; the Irish Volunteer movement was, in its anti-English aspect, a revolt of the Irish manufacturing class against the restrictions put upon their trade by England, 'free trade, or else' was the motto they hung upon their cannon, and when that one point was gained all the 'patriotic enthusiasm' of the leaders vanished; Grattan termed the volunteers upon whose backs he had climbed to political eminence, 'an army rabble' and the whole movement collapsed as suddenly as it had arisen—the economic basis been gone the patriotism was no longer evident.

'WHEN THE WORKER has so far advanced as to realise that his master's interests are antagonistic to his own, that the master class use every weapon from Parliament to prison to maintain their position against what they consider the encroachment of their serfs, then we have no doubt that the next step in the intellectual development of the worker will be to consider whether it is wise to tolerate longer a class in society which requires to be watched so constantly and guarded against so vigilantly; whether there is indeed any useful function performed by the capitalist and landlord class which the organised workers cannot perform without them.' ('Workers' Republic', August 27, 1898.)

'THE FREEDOM of the working class must be the work of the working class.' ('Erin's Hope—The End and the Means').

why house prices increase

by joe kemmy

ON THE FRONT PAGE of the property market supplement of the 'Irish Independent' of August 4, banner headlines announced: 'No Way To Curb Rising House Prices!' A smaller headline added: 'Except by servicing land in sufficient quantities.' The article underneath is based on a review of the recent 'Report on New House Prices' published by the National Prices Commission. The report deals with proposals for controlling new house prices on the basis of wage and material increases, but it ignores land, which was not included in the author's brief. Even the 'Independent' recognised the inadequacy of any survey not taking land prices into account and commented that 'this omission undermined the value of the report as a comprehensive treatise on the issue of housing inflation.'

The article claims: 'The key to the whole question of land speculation and consequent inflation of house prices rests with Article 43 of the Constitution of Ireland. Because it is so relevant to any discussion on the merits or otherwise of nationalisation of house building curbing of speculation or the like, it is worth quoting in full. The article then quotes the Constitution dealing with the rights of private property, and states that '... a plethora of schemes to curb speculation in housing land have been still-born because they were anti-Constitutional and indeed the Committee of Inquiry into Land Prices which was set up by Mr. Robert Molloy, the Minister for Local Government, has so far failed to come up with a workable scheme to curb land inflation despite it being commissioned in January, 1971. It has yet to make final submissions, but early this year it had certainly come up with no workable and effective solution and the odds must be against it doing so at all.'

'It is worth recapping that when the Minister for Local Government announced at a press conference on the 19th of January, 1971, that he had decided to set up the Committee, he told reporters that he was in favour of the State taking all the profits from land which has increased in value because of the laying on of sanitary services by Local Authorities.'

'Quoting an example he said that if land which had an agricultural value of £400 per acre as a result of sanitary services being laid on, he would be in favour of taking the difference of £3600 per acre in taxation 'for the benefit of the community.'

'While imposing such a taxation might not necessarily be in contempt of the Constitution it would certainly be impractical, for it would eliminate the incentive for land owners to sell.'

The 'Independent' article then shows how the Minister's land tax scheme is unworkable and is 'not on' as far as the

land speculators are concerned. 'Of course, Compulsory Purchase Orders could be sought, but if every site for a house were to be acquired in this way it would almost certainly throw the whole house building industry into chaos and make the private builder dependent on the Government for land instead of being able to assemble the land banks which are necessary for a continuity of work.' And then the writer obligingly gives the Minister a way out. 'Obviously the Minister threw out this example more as an earnest of his determination to tackle the problem of rising house prices than as a workable scheme to curb land speculation, but it did indicate his thinking.'

The Minister has not as yet acted upon his land tax suggestion—nor is he ever likely to do anything other than talk vaguely about the need for some kind of action. It is no coincidence that the leading and wealthiest supporters of the Government party are closely connected with the building industry. Building contractors, architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and land and property speculators of all sorts have invested some of their money and time in the Fianna Fail party and are determined to protect their investment. During the recent Mid-Cork by-election it was significant that the Minister for Local Government's constant travelling and canvassing companion was none other than one of the bosses of the country's leading building firms, Frank McInerney.

The 'Report on New House Prices' has nothing new to say about dealing with the rapidly increasing building prices. It

draws the obvious conclusion 'that it would be unfair to control the price of new houses without also controlling the price of land, labour and materials which are the main resources necessary for house building.'

According to information contained in a statement issued by the Construction Industry Federation, on October 17, 1970, land prices had risen by 700% in the past ten years. This fact, the Federation claimed, was largely responsible for inflation in the 26-Counties' economy. House prices followed a similar trend in the ten-year period.

'From the standpoint of this higher form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite absurd as private ownership of one man by another.'
Karl Marx.

One vital aspect of building which did not follow this trend in the very same decade was the labour content in housing. A survey, 'An Examination of Labour Content in Housing', published in May, 1970, by An Foras Forbartha, the National Institute for Physical Planning and Construction Research, showed that the total man-hours on the construction of an average house were down by over 1,000 hours per house. This result was based on a detailed examination of a scheme of 34 semi-detached houses, but it was considered a reliable guide to the general trend in house building productivity from 1959 to 1969. Detailed figures for man-hours and housing were last published in 1959, and showed an average of 2,300 hours for houses of comparable size to those which were the subject of An Foras Forbartha study and which averaged 1,125 within a range of 1,465 to 983 hours.

And so, while land costs for houses were rising by over 700%, the labour content was being reduced by over 100%. This position is partially stated by the recent 'Report on New House Prices.' It shows that the consumer price index increased from 100 to 139.7 from mid-1967 to January, 1972. In the same period building materials increased to 133.3 and building industry wage rates to 164. However, in the same period developed land prices increased from 100 to 274.

Despite Bobby Molloy's huffing and puffing about curbing land speculation it is clear from the laws of capitalism that land and housing will continue to rise until they reach the levels existing in other EEC countries. At present Irish prices are lower than other European countries. That the 'Independent' understands this position is shown by its concluding sentence: 'So far no constitutional and effective way has been found of controlling land prices and local authorities have failed to service land in sufficient quantity to eliminate the extreme scarcity value which exists at the moment, so there would appear to be no immediate prospect of house prices being stabilised in a way which would be fair to builder and purchaser(!)' In this context the 'purchaser' bit and the concern shown for his interests is just another 'for the record' statement and has no other significance.

DEAD END

The dark lines
Hide his youthful years.

The nature of talk
Shows contempt
For what is termed society.

Wandering aimlessly
From one dead end job to another.

Never seizing the elusive opportunity
Meaning peace.

Asking what went wrong
Silently blaming himself
Then cursing God.

D 08912

COUNCIL COMMENTARY

THE SCENE IS A DESERTED Council Chamber. Footsteps can be heard. A man enters and takes his place at the Council table. He has papers under his arm and drops these on the table. He searches through them.

Man: 'Now Holy God where is my copy of Lee Dunne? All this 'culture with profit' going on at the City Theatre has me driven round the bend'.

A munching sound can now be heard from behind the red curtain. The man stops his searching and cocks his ear.

Man: Rats ... bloody rats.

The red curtain is pushed savagely back and revealed is the Mayor, Cllr. Paddy Kiely, who has been munching black jacks and sucking jelly babies.

Mayor: Who called me a rat ... I'm the Mayor ... I demand to know ... was it you Coughlan ... was it?

Coughlan: Paddy, for God's sake will you shut up ... of course I called you a rat ... sure aren't you one of our own?

While the Mayor knows on Coughlan bursts out laughing and two more Council members, Cllr. Jack Bourke and Ald. Pat Kennedy enter the Chamber.

Bourke: Come on and start this meeting. There is a wonderful cultural happening in the City Theatre ...

Coughlan: Oh ... plug your own. People coming in here telling us what to do. I never saw the like of it in all my life.

Kennedy: Oh will you shut up and get on with the business of helping the people.

Coughlan: The Messiah has spoken.

The various Corporation officials take their seats and rather suspicious-looking men enter the public gallery. The meeting begins but only a sucking sound can be heard.

Coughlan: Will you look at Paddy and he sucking black jack. We'll have to make a collection to buy him a dribbler.

Kennedy: Well he is better than you and your black jack act.

Coughlan: Hold on a minute now. I want to put the record straight....

Bourke: Harry up. 'The Lads' is on tonight.

Coughlan: Hold everything now and that goes for you too Bourke, you Coombe culture-monger.

Bourke: I resent that remark ... and demand a withdrawal.

Mayor: Right you are ... we'll all withdraw to Geary's Hotel.

Bourke: No, let's go to the City Theatre and be shocked for 75 pence.

Kennedy: One doesn't need the City Theatre to be shocked. The way the local Fine Gael people treat me is enough to shock anyone.

The City Manager, who up to now has been sleeping peacefully with his worried head laid on his elbows, wakes up and seeing a copy of 'A Bed in the Sticks' on the floor, jumps down from his perch. Triumphant, he holds the sample of Irish pornography high above the councillors heads roaring 'I have it'.

Immediately he is jumped by the fiery fighters of the Council, each claiming: 'tis mine ... 'tis mine.'

Above on his chair, the wistful Mayor looks contentedly on and muses: 'Girls are nice ... but black jack is the real thing.'

One of the men in the public gallery turned to the other and said: 'tis an awful disgrace ... them dirty books.' The other agreed. 'Oh 'tis shocking ... and to think we paid to get into the City Theatre ... and we can be shocked for free down here. I must come here more often to fully appreciate the councillors. They provide a better show than the Keystone Cops, with polished performers like these, who needs a theatre or a festival of culture in Limerick? Culture how are you!'

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

Dear Reader,

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AOH PASS BUCK

by tony crowley

THE RECENT DUBLIN CONFERENCE of the American section of the Ancient Order of Hibernians highlighted much of the hypocrisy and some of the confusion of the Order in their desire to bring about the 're-unification of the country'. Jack Lynch attended the conference and reverted to his 'moderate' position in his speech dealing with Northern Ireland. Lynch's attempt to patch up the holes in the policies of his lace-curtain friends failed badly. A heated but enlightening debate followed and some of the row even spilled over into the press.

The controversy broke on the question of whether the middle-class Catholic Nationalist AOH is prepared to give financial and moral support to the Provisional IRA in its campaign to 'take the North'. Judge Comerford, a past president of the American section, made his position clear when he said that the AOH had unequivocally supported the Provos bombing campaign morally and financially. He declared: 'Our organisation believes that violent means are legitimate for attaining the aspirations of the Irish people.' And the loss of innocent lives left him, apparently, unmoved: 'Under the modern concept of war, civilians generally bear the brunt of the warfare,' he stated.

But this kind of honesty was too much for the 'moderate' Lynch-line supporters in the AOH leadership. The new front of physical force supporters when matched against the previous 'respectable', religious, law and order image, was not

one calculated to win American or international approval. So an attempt was made to deny that any money had been slipped to the Provos.

But the hard-liners had the parting shot. As Tadgh Finn, a supervisor of detectives in New York and a past national director of the Hibernians, was leaving Shannon on his way home he blew the gaff on the AOH-Provo alliance. In a 'Limerick Chronicle' interview, of Saturday, August 5, he said: 'While we gave John Hulme 150,000 dollars, more than 1,000,000 dollars had been handed over to the IRA.' Finn was defeated by 40 votes for National Secretary at the Dublin conference.

He claimed 'that Conor Collins of Cork, the former IRA man during the '60s campaign, who contested the presidency of the Order in Dublin and who was beaten in Dublin by 40 votes, was backing him to the hilt in seeking an inquiry into the rigging of votes. 'We are backing the Provisionals all the way', he added. He stated that 'he would challenge the decision of the AOH convention which was carried by tourist votes and not by active members.'

Finn admitted that the 'leadership of the Order supported Cardinal Conway and John Hulme, but 90% of the members were backing the IRA ... However, while I feel Mr. Lynch is right in seeking a political solution, it is only by the work of the IRA that something good can come of the present troubles.' Here, indeed, is Lynch's and the Hibernians' strategy revealed in all its nakedness and glory in consciously and cynically using the IRA as the spearhead of Catholic nationalism in its campaign of 'uniting Ireland.'

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